MASS MEDIA THEORY, LEVERAGING RELATIONSHIPS, AND RELIABLE STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION EFFECTS

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ABSTRACT

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A review of known mass media and social theories shows that the U.S. military may be off track with regard to how it plans and conducts strategic communication. Even though the U.S. military emphasizes achieving strategic communication effects through carefully prepared written and verbal messages, research shows that effects from these messages are unreliable. On the other hand, strategic communication effects that stem from relationships are shown to be much more reliable. Embracing a relationship-centric rather than message-centric perspective of strategic communication can severely change how communicators view their information battlespace. This research shows that by moving to a relationship-centric vice message-centric strategic communication strategy, more reliable effects in the information environment will be achieved within an information battlespace that is less fluid and more manageable. While such a shift will dramatically change how commanders view their information battlespace, it will ensure that more appropriate strategic communication approaches are employed to achieve positive and decisive results.

MASS MEDIA THEORY, LEVERAGING RELATIONSHIPS, AND RELIABLE
STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION EFFECTS

Words matter. It has never been clearer than in this information age that people

respond to written and verbal messages in an endless mixture of ways, and that the

ways a sender presents information impacts the emotional response and behavior of a

receiver. Because words increasingly matter, the U.S. military's interest in strategic

communication, its potential, effects and limitations, is growing as well. There are many

definitions for strategic communication, but a recent and simple explanation defines it

as, "a way of persuading other people to accept ones' ideas, policies, or courses of

action."[1] The usual military capabilities that conduct strategic communication are public

affairs, information operations, and public diplomacy. Today's U.S. military leaders are

briefed daily on communication "messages," intended to effectively address whatever

the most likely subjects will be in the public consciousness, as assessed from mass

media. These written and verbal messages are critical to ensuring unity among the U.S.

military's public communicators, or "one voice," as well as timely response to

disinformation and breaking news.

This emphasis on messaging is nothing new or innovative, however. Since the

dawn of modern mass media, national leaders have worked to capture its power and

employ it to their advantage with large populations. The intense propaganda campaigns

of the early 20th Century show how past governments and militaries have used both

truthful and sometimes twisted information in order to vilify enemies, and mobilize

publics in support of a national cause.[2] What has always been troubling and frustrating

to public communicators though is that the effects from their "messages" are far from

predictable. Regardless of how carefully messages are crafted and employed, people respond differently to written and verbal messages, and sometimes they do not seem to respond at all. The problem is not that messages from words do not achieve effects, but rather, the effects are unreliable, difficult to manage and also difficult to assess. Partly because of this lack of reliability from messaging, one of the primary criticisms of strategic communication is that people can rarely guarantee the characteristics or timing of effects. With that in mind, areas of strategic communication that seem to have greater reliability than written or verbal messaging are communication that is based on relationships. It is not hard to see why: people respond positively to other people who are in the same social and cultural groups. Families respond to patriarchs and matriarchs, congregations respond to pastors, and teens respond to pressure from peers. There are many examples of communication campaigns that leverage pressure from social groups, such as public health initiatives and crime-fighting organizations, to achieve very successful strategic communication effects.

This paper will use known mass media and social theories to review how strategic communication that is based on relationships is more reliable than approaches that assume successful effects from messages alone. Figure 1 gives a list of referenced mass-media theories to be discussed. For the sake of clarity, "messages," or "messaging," in this paper always refers to written or verbal messages, rather than communication via action. The first three theories to be discussed all apply to message-centric communication. These theories will show how messages do in fact achieve effects, but that the effects are unreliable. The next four theories to be discussed apply to relationships, and will show how relationship-centric communication

can achieve more reliable effects. In addition, this paper will address two final theories

to show that there is no such thing as a relationship "magic bullet" that will always

achieve desired effects. Although there are theories that show how relationship-centric

communication is more reliable than message-centric communication, there are also

theories that show how publics will only tolerate a limited amount of persuasion from

mass media, and sometimes publics will use mass media to self-correct behavior in

order to make society seem more "normal."

Verbal and Written Message-Centric Theories	Premise of Theory
Magic Bullet	Every member of an audience responds to media messages in a relatively uniform way.
Psychodynamic Persuasion Strategy	"Learn-Feel-Do:" carefully employed information from a persuader can change the psychological structure of an individual.
Meaning Construction Persuasion Strategy	Words take on new meaning beyond the words themselves. Related to "branding."
Relationship-Centric Theories	
Media Systems Dependency	People use media because they are dependent on it in order to understand their environment.
Social Differentiation	Communication technology enables virtual sub-cultures to evolve according to individual interests.
Sociocultural Persuasion Strategy	"Learn-Conform-or be Punished:" Groups impose revised expectations on individuals, who must then conform to acceptable norms of behavior
Two-Step Flow	People are more likely to believe information from experts or authority-figure persons with whom they have a trusted or perceived positive relationship.
Relationship-Centric Theories That Show Limits of Effects	
Harmony and Balance	People gravitate toward information they already believe.
Structural Functionalism	When society begins to seem chaotic, the participants of the society will take steps to reestablish social harmony.

Figure 1: List of Referenced Theories

Relationships also cannot replace the utility of planned messages to ensure "one voice" among communicators, and for minimizing response time to defeat misinformation. Finally, this paper will also address how the information battlespace can change depending on a message-centric or relationship-centric perspective. In the end, words matter because messages in public communication are critical for unity of effort and timely response -- but relationships are also very important, and a combination of messages and relationships must be considered to achieve successful strategic communication effects.

<u>The Search for Messaging Effects</u>

Interestingly, the U.S. Army learned early on that message-centric public communication is not very reliable. The U.S. Army began using mass communication on an unprecedented scale during World War II, and conducted significant research to determine media effectiveness.[3] One of these Army projects was a series of films called *Why We Fight*. The purpose of this film series was to enhance the motivation of Army recruits during training and orientation. Research on the *Why We Fight* series revealed it was very good at providing factual information, somewhat effective in changing specific opinions, but having no effect in motivating people to serve or causing them to resent the enemy. When combined with other research, the *Why We Fight* series showed that a mass communication message is unlikely to change strongly held attitudes.[4] It seems illogical then, that despite what was learned in the *Why We Fight* series, and after years of communicating strategically, the U.S. military seems to remain heavily focused on achieving communication effects with messaging.

An indicator of how the U.S. Army came to its current approach to strategic communication occurred in the late 1990's. During this period, the missions of the U.S. military were turning more toward humanitarian and stability operations. Fire supporters at this time seemed bereft of opportunities to plan missions for lethal munitions, and instead began planning and organizing public affairs and information operations assets as part of non-lethal fires, perhaps because fires-planning was already a well-understood management tool.[5] In other words, information for general public consumption was sometimes controlled in the same manner as non-lethal ordnance, such as smoke artillery rounds. There seemed to be assumptions at that time that using carefully prepared information alone as part of fires planning could yield timely and reliable effects. Information for public release was simmered down to the most critical themes and messages, with the intent to publish at planned times via designated media. Today, information operations and public affairs are still often categorized as non-lethal fires.

Even though it may have seemed innovative in the 1990's, the idea that written and verbal messages could be managed and employed like ordnance was not new. The "Magic Bullet" Theory is an early message-centric communication theory referenced at least to World War I, and used again in 1930's Europe when Paul Joseph Goebbels employed intense propaganda and messaging techniques to mobilize and maintain German public will in support of Adolf Hitler's policies. The logic behind the Magic Bullet Theory is that every member of an audience responds to media messages in a relatively uniform way, and carefully crafted information can produce immediate and direct responses.[6] Sociologists today tend to regard the Magic Bullet Theory as "naïve

and simple."[7] Basically, the Magic Bullet Theory only seems to be effective if an audience is already psychologically disposed to either believing the message, or sincerely trusting the source of the information. For example, if the Magic Bullet Theory were used by the U.S. military in Iraq, it would first have to be assumed that there are some large populations there that would uniformly trust information from the U.S. government. Given the complexity of Arab audiences and their varying suspicions of western motives, it is likely that any U.S. effort to employ the Magic Bullet Theory in the Middle East would be a failure.

Despite the limitations of the Magic Bullet Theory, researchers continue to try to find a way to tie reliable effects to messaging – the idea of achieving valuable results with the mass distribution of words alone is just too tempting. This may be why the military today seems to employ another message-centric approach known as Psychodynamic Persuasion Strategy. The Psychodynamic Persuasion Strategy hinges on an assumption that the key to persuasion lies in effective individual learning. Many advertisers and other communicators employ this approach as though it were nothing short of common sense. The premise of Psychodynamic Persuasion Strategy is that carefully employed information from a persuader can change the psychological structure of an individual. This theoretical reaction to information might also be described as "learn-feel-do."[8] Hypothetically then, after exposure to carefully prepared messages, a person who has a firm suspicion of Soldiers will become somewhat less suspicious and more cooperative upon learning that only a tiny percentage of American Soldiers have ever committed crimes. The diagram below shows how Psychodynamic

Persuasion Strategy is intended to work. Once an individual hears a persuasive message, he thinks differently, and subsequently changes his behavior.

The problem with Psychodynamic Persuasion Strategy is that researchers can not make it work reliably. Rather than learning that Soldiers are trustworthy, feeling less afraid, and then behaving in a way that is not averse to Soldiers, it is impossible to determine how the example person's suspicions of American Soldiers are affected. This may be because, as researchers consistently have determined, unwanted 'boomerang' and side-effects occur because of unknown or uncontrolled variables in the audience. These problems significantly impact the success of information campaigns, which depend to some degree on messages being interpreted in the same way as was intended by the information source. Because all individuals are different and have varying life-situations and experiences, they often react to messages differently.[9]

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┌─────────────┐
│  Persuasive │
│    Media    │
│   Message   │
└─────────────┘
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       ▼
┌─────────────┐
│  Alters or  │
│  Activates  │
│  Cognitive  │
│    Factor   │
└─────────────┘
       │
       ▼
┌─────────────┐
│   Altered   │
│  Cognitive  │
│Factor Triggers│
│  or Shapes  │
│    Overt    │
│  Individual │
│   Behavior  │
└─────────────┘
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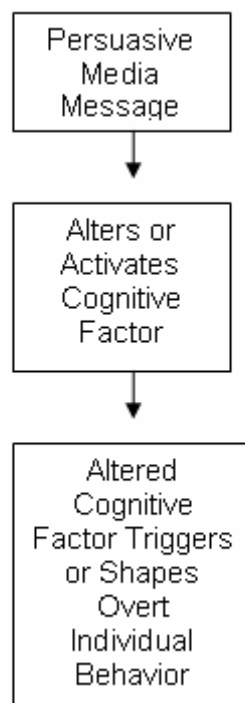
Figure 2: Psychodynamic Persuasion Strategy ("Learn-Feel-Do")[10]

One other theoretical approach using messaging that deserves discussion is Meaning Construction Persuasion Strategy.[11] People experience this strategy every day in the form of catchy advertising slogans and identifying logos that signal memory responses of the real meaning behind words. One mobile phone company identifies itself using the term," fewest dropped calls," while another asks, "can you hear me now?" A credit card company asks, "what's in your wallet,?" and a news organization says, "we report, you decide." The Army is "Army Strong," and the Marine Corps is, "the few and the proud." All these phrases are at the heart of modern branding techniques, and they carry meanings beyond the words themselves. In effect, the words take on a new meaning, as seen in the diagram below.

| Persuasive Media Message | → | Provides or changes meanings | → | Meanings give direction to action |
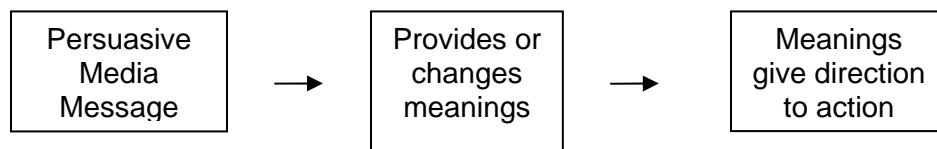
Figure 3: The Meaning Construction Persuasion Strategy[12]

When these slogans and brands work as intended, the meaning behind the words results in positive action, such as buying a cell phone or joining the Army. These techniques are clearly useful and effective, explaining the huge sums of money spent on advertising yearly. Once again though, and despite the many hours that advertisers spend brainstorming for the perfect phrase that will result in widespread action or profit, the Meaning Construction Persuasion Strategy is not consistently reliable. The effects of

branding may be successful for one audience or culture, but ineffective in another. A focus group may respond favorably to a slogan, but a broader audience may show minimal effect.

In roughly the past 100 years, there are reflections of all of these message-centric communication theories and approaches in the public communication efforts of the U.S. military. Because these message-centric techniques have unreliable effects on individuals, some information campaigns seem to be based on simple hope that broad distribution of messages will achieve intended effects on at least some members of an audience. For advocates who would manage messages as non-lethal fires, messages are the ultimate area-fire weapon. Still, the effects are unpredictable. The question then, is why do communicators continue to emphasize messaging in military planning? The answer already mentioned is the unity and timeliness that message planning affords. In addition, it seems to be ingrained in western psyche that messages in themselves achieve consistent and reliable effects, even though they do not.[13] This may be most evident by reviewing how the U.S. military tends to view something it calls "the information battlespace."

Message-Centric Information Battlespace

The various theories to which military strategic communicators subscribe can effect how they view the information battlespace. An internet search of "information battlespace" yields many different ideas about the environment of public communication and how that environment is effected. Generally, though, the view of the information battlespace that many in the U.S. military employ is an ever-changing domain of data that is continuously impacted by a large variety of influencers.[14] These influencers

include the White House and other global executive bodies, Congress, other agencies and foreign governments, various militaries and related institutions such as the Northern Atlantic Treaty Alliance, the United Nations, infinite media organizations, bloggers, and so on. The way to persuade people in this constantly changing information domain is to dominate the news cycle with high-interest events, appealing visuals, and well-crafted messages, in order to gain cognitive effect with audiences. The characteristics of an information battlespace that is nebulous and ever-changing include effects that last only as long as a subject remains in the mind, or cognitive domain, of the media and public. This means there is often constant anxiety among public communicators over which influencing agent has managed to dominate the news cycle. A videotape of Osama bin Ladin that is released by Al Qaeda to the general public may be considered a significant win for the enemy, and the organization that first publishes that videotape, perhaps *al Jazeera*, is suspected as an Al Qaeda sympathizer. Mass media analysts and researchers conduct endless assessments on the number of times specific "messages" are published in the press, and these numbers are sometimes presented as metrics for success or non-success.

Because the mass-media theories that have been discussed thus far show that messages do not achieve reliable effects, it is troubling that the U.S. military's strategic communication community views its information battlespace as just the opposite, a place that is constantly fluid and changing, but where effects can be reliably achieved. It is no wonder, the frustration: the U.S. military's constantly changing battlespace of information where messages, in fact, are not reliable might be akin to fighting the biggest tar baby ever imagined or worse, trying to shape a world made of goo.

Theories that Point to Relationships

One place to start when researching for mass media theories that are more sophisticated than the Magic Bullet Theory, and more reliable than other message-centric approaches, is to determine how and why people use media in the first place. The Media Systems Dependency Theory asserts that people use media because they are dependent on it in order to understand their environment. In a sense, people establish relationships with their preferred media. Watching news and entertainment on television, listening to the radio, reading newspapers and books, and of course surfing the internet all contribute to an individual's complete understanding of the world.[15] At the same time, media are dependent on audiences because it is each individual who chooses which media are useful and reliable. However, if a person ever comes to believe that a media source is no longer a trustworthy source of information, he or she will choose a different media system that is more credible. The implications of the Media Systems Dependency theory for the military are very serious, because it indicates how public information must have long term credibility in order to be strategically effective. Any information accredited to the U.S. military that is somehow proven to be fallacious or biased can ruin the military's relationship with an audience for as long as it takes to reestablish trust. Given the pervasiveness of public communication in today's world, the fallout from false information grows exponentially as information is passed from media to media.[16] Public information that intentionally deceives enemies can also deceive allies, all of whom have the potential to choose other sources of information once the deception is revealed. As one source explains it, "Everything in the realm of strategic communication should be as truthful as human endeavor can make it. Tell the truth

even though sometimes, for security, you can't tell the whole truth."[17] In the relationship between people and media, a medium gets dumped when it becomes untrustworthy.

Because people seem to establish forms of relationships with media, the Media Systems Dependency Theory's approach to why people choose media has a very important connection to the effects of another useful theory know as Social Differentiation. The Social Differentiation Theory contends that people increasingly choose communities of interest, rather than geographical communities. The result of willingly organizing into communities of interest is that people tend to separate into virtual sub-cultures based on whether they are liberal, conservative, athletic, academic, homosexual, Christian, Islamic, and so on.[18] The obvious modern-day connection between social differentiation and media is of course the internet which has enabled virtual sub-cultures to evolve dynamically according to individual interests. For instance, a man with a strong interest in hunting will seek out other people who like hunting. He might establish new relationships with other hunters using internet chat rooms and newsgroups, and these friends will tell him where to find the finest hunting equipment, as well as the best places to hunt. Because of shared interests and lifestyles, this hunter could eventually have more developed relationships with his online hunting friends than with his own next door neighbors. Therefore, when public communicators seek to be more influential by establishing perceived relationships with audiences, it is important to consider the norms, interests and media of various sub-cultures, and adjust engagement techniques accordingly.

To some degree, by taking steps to communicate with differing audiences according to what media is preferred, the U.S. military is already operating in the realm

of social differentiation. Blogging, podcasting, web communication, television, radio, and installation newspapers are all used by the U.S. military to reach different sub-cultures of society. Still, if the military fails to remain a credible source of information using any particular medium it has invested in, the Media Systems Dependency Theory indicates that the sub-cultures tied to that medium are potentially lost to the military for an undetermined period of time in lieu of other, more credible sources of information. When applied to the Middle East, the implications for the U.S. military are very severe: if sub-cultures perceive media that present the U.S. military's information as less credible than an adversary's media, the U.S. military potentially loses those sub-cultured audiences to media that report an enemy's points of view.

Critical to the ideas behind Social Differentiation Theory, and the possible persuasive powers of sub-cultures, is the importance and influence of individual sociocultural relationships. It was mentioned at the beginning of this paper how the military sometimes seems to use the approach of Psychodynamic Persuasion Strategy in its public communications resulting in a "learn-feel-do" explanation for how people are persuaded. Even though this approach seems like common sense, researchers have an abundance of evidence to suggest that individuals are actually more persuaded by social expectations than by direct messages. Most people have heard of "peer-pressure," for instance, and its influence on the behavior of teens. So, hypothetically again, in a community where Soldiers represent a key means of security or income, a person who dislikes and criticizes Soldiers in that social environment might, in turn, be humiliated or belittled by other members of the local society. In this example case, the individual stops criticizing Soldiers because the group imposes a sort of "learn-conform-

or be punished," approach, rather than "learn-feel-do."[19] As seen in the diagram below,
when a group responds to information, perhaps from a persuasive leader, the values
and norms for the group can change. In turn, the group imposes revised expectations
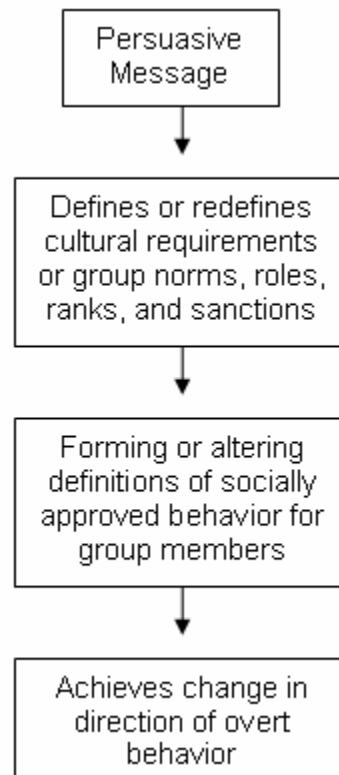on individuals, who must then conform to acceptable norms of behavior.

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┌─────────────┐
│ Persuasive  │
│  Message    │
└─────────────┘
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┌──────────────────┐
│ Defines or redefines │
│ cultural requirements│
│ or group norms, roles,│
│ ranks, and sanctions │
└──────────────────┘
       │
       ▼
┌──────────────────┐
│ Forming or altering │
│ definitions of socially│
│ approved behavior for │
│ group members       │
└──────────────────┘
       │
       ▼
┌──────────────────┐
│ Achieves change in │
│ direction of overt │
│ behavior          │
└──────────────────┘
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Figure 4: Sociocultural Persuasion Strategy ("Learn-Conform-or-Be Punished")[20]

This approach is referred to as Sociocultural Persuasion Strategy, and the key
difference between this and Psychodynamic Persuasion Strategy is that researchers
have more than enough evidence to show that it works. Generally, the social groups
that people interact in, whether family, schools, churches, clubs or cliques, have
enormous influence over what is and is not normal, acceptable and expected
behavior.[21]

Society has endless examples of how group-pressure is leveraged to change behavior, from the use of Alcoholics Anonymous as an effective means of combating drinking, and "Smoke Out" day to discourage cigarette use, to heavy publicizing of the "Run for the Cure" to encourage activism on behalf of breast cancer cures.[22] Simply, the power of social and cultural groups within public communication is extraordinarily significant. When applied to how the U.S. military communicates and changes opinions among populations, community relations and civil affairs techniques become very important tools within the Sociocultural Persuasion Strategy framework. Events and actions that emphasize well-being and respect for groups have the potential to, sequentially, influence the behavior of single individuals.

Because group-pressure is so persuasive on the behavior of individuals, the challenge for the U.S. military is determining how to establish, reestablish or improve linkages with key audiences or sub-cultures. The concept of Two-Step Flow is a theory that at least provides a starting point to persuading groups. The Two-Step Flow Theory asserts that people are more likely to believe information from experts or authority-figure persons with whom they have a trusted or perceived positive relationship, such as a pastor, parent, trusted journalist, or like-minded politician.[23] This theory, again, is not new: it is about engaging and networking with opinion-setters who have the capacity to impact the attitudes of secondary audiences. As an example, the late Jerry Falwell often used media to inform his Evangelical Christian followers. When something appeared in the news that was controversial to Falwell's followers, they might reserve their opinions until hearing what Falwell had to say about the subject.[24] When the Two-Step Flow is tied to Social Differentiation, it is clear that identifying the opinion-leaders for a variety of

sub-cultures is key to impacting the behavior of larger and more general audiences. The Ayatollah Sistani, for instance, is a critical opinion-setter that the U.S. military must consider to gain a positive relationship with many Shi'ites in Iraq. Likewise, Muktadr al-Sadr is another opinion-setter for the Shiite Mehdi Militia sub-culture in Iraq, and the U.S. military has already shown that it must decide whether to silence or persuade al-Sadr in order to change the behavior of the Mehdi Militia.

Relationship-Centric Information Battlespace

The four relationship-centric theories discussed in the section above show that strategic communication effects that hinge from relationships tend to be more reliable than message-centric effects. It is important now to discuss how a relationship-centric battlespace differs from the message-centric information battlespace that was discussed earlier. The information battlespace for a communication strategy that is focused specifically on relationships is less fluid. It is not a domain of ever-changing data. Rather, the battlespace for relationships is, simply, people. As seen in the Sociocultural Persuasion Strategy, people consistently respond to the pressures from their associated groups, such as churches or families, and often conform to the behaviors of a group even if they do not personally believe in that behavior. In a battlespace of people, there is less concern over dominating the information domain, and more targeted focus on information that can affect the core opinions of groups and sub-cultures. An individual who hears a particular message may never change behavior in the way intended by the sender, even if he hears the message repeatedly – but, if a group as a whole is persuaded, perhaps through the influence of group opinion-leaders, then the individual may be persuaded as well. Researchers have determined

16

that, "many longer-term effects of mass media do not involve the intentional or immediate audience at all, but are the secondary responses of others." [25] Finally, analysis of an information battlespace of people is less about the number of times a message appears in the media, and instead an assessment of cultural norms, behaviors and opinions on issues, in response to detailed study, surveys, focus groups and other similar types of research.

Relationship-Centric Theories That Show Limits of Effects

Despite having more reliable effects, relationship-centric theories do not offer any "Magic Bullet" of their own. There are also theories that highlight realistic limitations to the potential effects of relationship-centric communication. First, related to the Two-Step Flow is the Harmony and Balance Theory, which asserts that people gravitate toward information they already believe. In other words, audiences do not want to be challenged by new information or controversial ways of thinking. Audiences instead seek out other people with whom they already agree.[26] Most Rush Limbaugh listeners, for instance, listen to "Rush" because they have already decided in favor of the things that he says, not necessarily because Rush Limbaugh is autonomously empowered to significantly change the opinions of large audiences. The implication behind Harmony and Balance Theory for the U.S. military is that it can not be assumed that sub-culture members who have controversial leaders are simple-minded or easily swayed. Rather, it is more likely that sub-culture members have identified with a group and leader that already reflect their acceptable norms and beliefs. Referring back to al-Sadr and the Mehdi Militia in Iraq, some people might say that al-Sadr can mobilize the Mehdi Militia because he speaks forcefully for a community that has suffered oppression in Iraq.

However, Harmony and Balance explains that many Shiites in and around Baghdad are sympathetic to al-Sadr's political and religious opinions because they already share similar views.

A second theory that reveals the limits of effects from relationship-centric communication is Structural Functionalism. The concept behind the Structural Functionalism Theory is that the organization of society is the source of its stability, and each category of society's participants contributes to the attainment of social harmony.[27] When society begins to seem chaotic, the participants of the society will take steps to reestablish social harmony. When applied to mass media, Structural Functionalism indicates that audiences that are experiencing chaos will prefer media that reflect a return to social harmony. American television programming from the 1960's and 1970's are possible examples. Television audiences might have preferred "The Brady Bunch," "The Waltons," and "Happy Days," because these shows reflected ideal families with normal behavior. Applied to the chaos of current Iraqi society, Structural Functionalism would assert that many Iraqis will prefer media that point to a return to an Iraqi view of social harmony. In other words, some Iraqis might prefer media that identify with traditional values and strict interpretations of Islam, reflecting a desire to return to historically stable governments in Islamic history. Structural Functionalism's challenge for the U.S. military is how to best present Iraqis with a path to social harmony that does not require a return to non-democratic, oppressive forms of Islamic government.

Discussion and Recommendations

The first thing that should result from reading this study is realization that messages alone are not sufficient for planning and achieving reliable strategic

communication effects. Messages are critical to unity of intent among various communicators, achieving, "one voice," and responding quickly in order to address breaking news and disinformation. But messaging effects are not reliably consistent or controllable. On the other hand, effects from relationship-centric communication are much more reliable. Unfortunately, at the same time that U.S. military strategic communicators seem heavily focused on gaining effects via messaging, there seems to be few mechanisms for harnessing relationships, and those that exist appear primarily in the civil affairs and public affairs (community relations) arenas, as well as various engagements with military support to public diplomacy.[28] The community relations parts of public affairs are currently very focused on enhancing the U.S. military's image in local communities through bands, capability demonstrations, speakers bureaus, and similar venues, but do not necessarily operate along synchronized paths to achieve strategic effects. In order to become more effective, the U.S. military's strategic communication efforts should evolve in planning and execution to include effects via relationships, both personal and public. These identified relationships should include government, community, media and opinion leaders that have the capacity to impact audiences on a local, national and international level. Planning should also address the sociocultural norms that drive these audiences, as well as reasonable goals for impacting audience behaviors. Also, because public affairs is the only strategic communication capability that communicates directly to U.S. citizens, the community relations capabilities of U.S. military public affairs should be expanded and refined.

The second thing the reader should glean from this study is that the U.S. military's information battlespace is much more manageable and understandable if viewed from a

relationship-centric rather than message-centric perspective. A battlespace that is centered on relationships is less fluid, and enables communication techniques that have more reliable effects. The attitudes and beliefs of people evolve over time. Therefore, a people-oriented battlespace does not immediately change or justify panic just because a strategic communicator makes a mistake, or an enemy proves able to publish his message. On the other hand, a message-centric battlespace is hardly manageable, precisely because it is ever-changing with new information, and because the effects from messages intended to change the battlespace are themselves unreliable. As a result, the U.S. military should reexamine if its current view of the information battlespace is useful and appropriate. Choosing to view the information battlespace from a relationship-centric, or people, point of view would require communicators to think about strategic communication in entirely new ways. One, because relationships require time to evolve, the effects and expectations from strategic communication would be less immediate. Two, strategic communicators would have to operate according to information that goes well beyond what is being "said," so that decisions are also based on what is being "done." Third, analysts in a relationship-centric battlespace would have to focus less on how many times certain information appears in the mass media, and more on identifying key personalities and influencers, as well as their agendas, preferences, characteristics and personal interests.

Finally, the third result from this paper ought to be questioning regarding whether or not the U.S. military is adequately prepared to conduct successful strategic communication that is based on relationships. A military that is predominately focused on achieving victory through combat may not be correctly postured to also achieve

victory in communication and diplomacy. This means that the U.S. military must critically review its programs for language and cultural training, as well as for strategic communication training, to ensure that leaders can succeed in a non-lethal, relationship-centric battlespace. Also, the U.S. military must seriously review its own relationship with the U.S. State Department, determine precisely what all the military's roles are in diplomacy, and enable better linkages between foreign affairs officers and other strategic communicators.

Conclusion

In summary, even though the U.S. Army learned during World War II that message-centric public communication is not a reliable means of gaining desired effects, most of its communication efforts still seem to work from a message-centric point of view. The Magic Bullet Theory, Psychodynamic Persuasion Strategy, and Meaning Construction Persuasion Strategy all show that written and verbal messages have effects, but that these effects are not reliable. On the other hand, communication that harnesses relationship linkages are much more reliable. The Sociocultural Persuasion Strategy shows that groups have the power to influence individual behavior, as seen in families, churches, schools, businesses and communities. The Two-Step Flow explains that the leaders of these sociocultural groups have the ability to influence the behavior of associated communities and sub-cultures. Once these and the other discussed theories are fully understood, the challenge for the U.S. military is determining how to establish, reestablish or improve strategic communication with key audiences or sub-cultures and their leaders. Ultimately, strategic communicators have to develop both synchronized messaging and savvy management of relationships to

achieve unified and reliable strategic communication. In his classic guide on, "How to Win Friends and Influence People," Dale Carnegie suggests that the only way to get anybody to do anything without forcing them is by making them want to do it.[29] The way to make them want to do something is by determining and offering what they need or desire. Similarly, the late Speaker of the House of Representatives "Tip" O'Neil is oft remembered for saying, "All politics is local." His own success indicates he knew that one must demonstrate true concern for the well-being of voters in order to gain their support. These classic communicators understood that extraordinary powers of persuasion very often result from having a real or perceived positive relationship with individuals or larger audiences. Perhaps it is time for the U.S. military to do the same.

<u>Endnotes</u>

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[7] Ibid., 164.

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[9] Denis McQuail, *McQuail's Mass Communication Theory*, (London: Sage Publications, Ltd., 2005), 476.

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[15] Defleur and Ball-Rokeach, 304.

[16] Halloran, 13.

[17] Ibid., 14.

[18] Defleur and Ball-Rokeach, 186.

[19] Ibid, 282.

[20] Ibid., 285

[21] Ibid., 283.

[22] Severin and Tandard, 193.

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[24] Dr. Corely Dennison, Dean, W. Page Pitt School of Journalism and Mass Communications, Marshall University, telephone interview by author, 9 November, 2007.

[25] McQuail, 478.

[26] Dennison.

[27] Defleur and Ball-Rokeach, 31.

[28] U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Joint Functions*, Joint Publication 3.0 (Washington D.C.: U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, 17 September 2006), III-15.

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